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What is Navaratri?

Navaratri literally means nine nights. Navaratri is observed twice a year when two seasons are merging and there is plenty of charge in the atmosphere. It is a perfect time to enhance our practice or bring a change into our life. Since there is plenty of charge in the atmosphere, it becomes like riding the wave in comparison to treading the rough waters of obstacles.

Historically during this time, Rama was victorious over Ravana and Suras were victorious over the Asuras. Such battles are constantly being fought in our personal lives, good habits versus bad. One who engages in overcoming darkness during this time succeeds in enriching oneself with light - misfortune turns into fortune, fear turns into strength.

Astrologically it is also a very auspicious time. All the planets are aligned in a way to give abundant help to those bringing a change in their lives or seeking divine intervention.

Navaratri practitioners engage one-pointedly in their *sadhana* (practice). Mindfulness, austerity and devotion are important themes. The Navaratri observance begins on the first day of the new moon. As the moon fills with light, so does the life of the participant.

How is Navaratri Observed?

That Great Unknown which is known and revered by various names and forms in different cultures and places is revered as Mother during Navaratri. To express our devotion, if we have to give a name and a form to that Great Unknown, we call it Ma, Mother, because it is the Mother who gives birth to us, nurtures us with her milk and is the first friend we when we are born on this earth.

Ma is also called *Shakti*. In her various forms and manifestations in our lives, she enables us to live our lives. Although the Shakti is one, Her different qualities have been given different names, just as a person may respond to one name at home, another at work and yet another in play. Out of this idea, Her names and forms came into existence.

Shakti is worshipped as Maha Kali, remover of darkness, Maha Lakshmi, provider of opulence and Maha Saraswati, giver of wisdom. It is the formless that takes form depending on the intensity of the seeker's longing and devotion.

In order to succeed in anything in our lives, we need the blessings of Shakti. Shakti is the all-pervading energy that is the source of the existence of the world. All the living creatures become lifeless for lack of Shakti. It manifests itself in numerous ways. Shakti is the energy, power, strength, source or existence of "God," manifesting itself as creation.

During Navaratri we acknowledge and revere that formless by giving it a form.

Shakti Upasana

Navaratri is the time to engage ourselves in the upasana of Shakti. Upasana literally means *to obtain a seat next to, to get close to, enrich oneself with, worship, etc.* We express our love and adoration to Shakti in physical form through puja (rituals), and also with our meditation and contemplation.

The first aspect of upasana is to treat these days very special, as if we have an appointment with God. During this time we invite the Mother, with the deepest heartfelt yearning, to visit our home or Ashram. Assuming that the Mother has taken a seat on the altar, offerings of water, flower, incense, lamp, fruit etc. are offered twice a day. This can be done alone, with our family or as a group in our Ashram. Her presence is as real as we make it. Puja can be simple or elaborate, depending on the circumstance.

The second and most important aspect of upasana is our commitment to be at our best. Besides the rituals, we make a commitment to spend a fixed amount of time in meditation or repeating our Guru mantra. **During Navaratri this commitment is a must.** No commitment is greater than this commitment. No matter where we are, we are always aware of the presence of the Divine Mother very close to us and our appointment with Her. We take extra care to not engage in any situation or exchange that takes us away from our center.



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We maintain a constant remembrance of the sacredness of this time. We become like an empty cup which is being filled with the Divine Mother's grace. To keep the cup empty and clean we observe various kinds of manageable austerities. During these auspicious days Mother's grace is constantly being showered upon us - all we have to do is be available to receive it by keeping our heart and mind clean and steady.

To maintain a steady heart and mind during Navaratri, we simplify our lives. We minimize our engagement with the outside world. In other words, it is like an intensive. Anyone participating in an intensive takes time out for it. Withdrawing from our usual daily routine, we submerge into a completely different kind of surrounding and atmosphere. It is a self imposed intensive. There are no excuses for not doing what we have committed to do in the name of our spiritual practice.

Austerity is the Main Theme During Navaratri

When we engage in the world through our senses, a tremendous amount of energy is required to process everything - what we see, hear, touch, smell and taste. The more we take in, the more we have to process and digest. During Navaratri, we minimize the intake of the world through our senses and curb the desire of the sensory organs. All the energy that would have been used to process it all is freed up and becomes available to us for other purposes. It is for this reason we practice austerity during Navaratri.

- We observe silence or speak only what is necessary and pleasant.
- We avoid getting into arguments.
- We avoid listening to small talk or useless propagandas on radios, computers, etc.
- We minimize the intake through our eyes: avoid movies, exhibitions, television, etc.
- We avoid indulging in sensual objects.
- We avoid physical contact with others like touching, hugging, massages, etc.

- We maintain a simple diet - eat once in the day or go on a fruit and vegetable diet (not driven by taste buds). When our body does not have to process rich food, we have plenty of clean energy at our disposal which is directed upwards for an enlightened state of being.
 - Any leisure time is spent staying focused on our mantra or communing with the Divine Mother.
 - We remain alert to the qualities of our mind, voice and action. It helps us to maintain a peaceful, content and devotional state.
 - We maintain a very strict discipline of accomplishing necessary chores on time.
 - We visit Ashrams and places of worship where others are engaged in similar observances and activities. In other words, we strive to **keep good company**.
 - We try to find some time to read scriptures or teachings of great beings.
- Mind will have many excuses and reasons to not let us bring austerity into our lives even for these nine days.



In being clever or lazy with ourselves, we remain deprived of that supreme joy. To reap the full benefit of this heightened time, **we have to make an effort and do what we usually do not do**. During this time, we live the way we idealize our life to be without any excuses.

Once we honestly look at how we spend our time or for what reasons we take time off, it will be very apparent how much we are willing to invest in the name of spiritual progress which is the source of everlasting joy and happiness. Unaware of this, we end up spending so much time and effort in endeavors that bring us only fleeting moments of happiness.

Navaratri gives us the opportunity to reevaluate our commitment to our Higher-Self. **If we want happiness, peace and prosperity, we do have to make an effort and some sacrifice**. The Divine Mother definitely hears our call made during these days.

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We Ask Ourselves

- What do I expect from my spiritual practice?
- What do I expect from the Divine Mother?
- How much effort or sacrifice am I putting in that direction in comparison to the efforts I make for other things in life?

Morning Routine

- On getting up in the morning we rub both our hands on our face with the sentiment, *O God, O supreme soul, O brightest light, O ray of hope! Today please make me meet very good people, may the one with whom I live be pleased with me, and may I earn my livelihood without any troubles.*
- The appropriate time for meditation is early in the morning in the “divine period” (an hour and thirty six minutes before dawn). Sitting up in bed, we remember God and our mantra.
- Before stepping on the ground, we pray to Mother Earth (by touching the ground with our right hand and then touching our forehead). We ask forgiveness for touching Her with our feet.
- After that, we complete our toiletries, shower and put on clean clothes.
- We purify our asana (meditation seat) by sprinkling a few drops of water on it. We put our right foot on the asana, and then our left. We sit facing east, north or west (not south) with a peaceful mind.

For all who have taken these nine days to be at the Ashram, we start our day like this and follow the Ashram’s daily routine.



For all who are observing Navaratri at home:

- Do puja and meditation, then accomplish the duties that await you.
- If you are participating in daily puja at the Ashram, you can do some jap at home and then come to

the puja or do your jap after the puja at the Ashram.

- Have a light breakfast of fruit, nuts and yogurt with some honey, thinking all the while, “This will carry me through the day.”
- Take plenty of fluid during the day. If you can avoid or minimize coffee or tea, it is a good idea. Accomplish your duties or job maintaining sweetness in your heart. Avoid getting ruffled or over excited about things. In between events, take a deep breath, return to your heart and remember your mantra.



- Repeat your mantra (even in your office) several times a day.
- Return home avoiding dinner engagements with others if you can. Give attention to your spouse and children. Take a shower and do little meditation or puja and then have a light dinner. Sit for more meditation or repetition of your mantra before going to bed. While going to bed, imagine the presence of the Mother in your

heart, relax your eyes, lighten your heart and await Her presence in your heart. It may just be a soft blue light. Take this to be Her presence and let the communion happen. Avoid bringing words and dialogues. Fall asleep.

Navaratri Rituals and Customs: Helpful Hints and Practical Considerations

The Ashram daily schedule includes group rituals, seva and personal time. We live with a perfect balance of busyness with seva and busyness with our sadhana. Here are some helpful hints and practical points for imbuing the sacredness of this time.

Puja

Showing our reverence and respect at puja time, we:

- Arrive to the temple at least five minutes before the scheduled start of morning and evening puja and get settled.

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- Enter quietly, taking our prayer book if needed (located just to the left of the door, inside the temple) and asana (pillow), and gracefully find our spot. In the temple and in general, we try to move about in a way that doesn't disturb even the air.
- Avoid the following:
 - Sitting with the feet pointed toward the altar or Babaji.
 - Voicing and mouthing prayers and mantras while Babaji is saying them at the altar; if we are practicing the words, then we say them silently to ourselves.
 - Allow at least 5 feet between our seat and Babaji's seat.
 - Take a moment of silence and stillness after the final Navaratri chant.
 - Avoid clapping at the time instruments are changed just before singing of arati.

Note: After Arati, when we offer a flower at the altar, several people can be at the altar at the same time. After offering our flower at the altar, we can return to our seat and pay our respects to Babaji from our seat.

Approaching the "Guru Gita"

The Guru Gita is an hour long Sanskrit chant about the grace of the Guru. Books with English translations are available for reading during our free time and are located just inside the temple door to the left. If you borrow a book, please be sure to bring it with you at the chanting time.

At Guru Gita time, we:

- Arrive at least five minutes before the schedule start time and get settled.
- Stay mindful of the volume of our voice during the chant and follow the leader's pace.
- Maintain a good posture throughout the chant, sitting with our spines straight, shoulders open, and holding the book in the right hand in front of our eyes; it's good to make sure the prayer book doesn't touch the floor directly.

- Avoid getting up in the middle of the chant. We treat it as a meditation.
- Pay our respects to the Guru or Guru's seat after the chant.

Prasad (Blessed Food)

Prasad is prepared for those living at the Ashram during Navaratri who are fully observing the Navaratri fast. We take prasad twice a day in silence, once in the morning after the morning puja, and a second time in the late afternoon. We honor this sacred time by:

- Coming to prasad when the bell rings or arriving a little early and giving some help wherever it is needed: for example, dishes in the sink could be washed or loaded in the dishwasher, counters and dining tables could be wiped, water glasses could be filled, food could be brought out to the buffet table, etc.
- Being mindful of the amount of food we take.
- Helping with clean-up.



Seva and Personal Time

During Navaratri, we are inviting the Divine Mother to the Ashram and our home. Cleanliness and tidiness are utmost important. We keep our rooms, common spaces, porches, patios, grounds and gardens extra clean and beautiful.

It is helpful to establish a daily schedule that includes a balance of time for seva and sadhana. It is also helpful to adopt a certain responsibility that can be done daily to help with the flow of the day, and stay committed to it for the duration of Navaratri.

Before morning puja is an ideal time to take a 1/2 hour to sweep and tidy any area that needs attention—our rooms, bathrooms, entrances, driveway, etc.

Maintaining Silence

Part of our austerity during Navaratri is maintaining

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silence. In addition to not speaking, some participants also choose to avoid eye contact, while others will make eye contact and smile. Some write notes when necessary and others refrain even from this kind of communication. It is good to stay focused on whichever way is comfortable to us while honoring others' preferences.

Maintaining silence is not a somber activity - rather one where our hearts become filled with joy for turning inward with one pointed attention and focus on our practice. Try noticing what other senses become heightened as we begin to quiet down.

Navaratri is the time to cultivate love for the Divine.

During Navaratri the hunger and yearning to know the Divine Mother takes center stage. I want to know Her so completely, I am always conscious that every vibration of my being and surrounding my being is, was, and always will be, Her ... Mother.

~ Baba Harihar Ramji



Baba Harihar Ramji addressed a gathering on the eve of the Fall 2001 Navaratri observance with the following words:

Introduction to Navaratri

On this auspicious eve of Navaratri, I would like to welcome you. It is such a sacred time. As you already know, this opportunity comes twice a year, when all the planets, all the elements, everything, is favorable to us.

Navaratri is our opportunity to engage in one-pointed practice with that Great Unknown who is known by so many different names in different cultures, who is beyond any name, form, gender, color, who permeates every single atom of this space between the earth and the sky. Yet when we try to come closer to it, it is beyond our comprehension. That is why, to focus our attention, we give the formless a form, try to give it a name that we can relate to. If I have to give a name to that great Unknown, I call it Mother, Ma. This mother is our first

friend when we come onto the Earth. Even before we are on the Earth, She carries us in Her womb, nurturing us with Her body, and then She gives birth to us and nurtures us with Her milk. Her attention is constantly focused on the needs of Her baby. Ever-attentive She is. She is constantly thinking about what could be Her baby's next need. Mother is thus our first friend, our first teacher, our first Guru. So if I have to give a name to that Great Unknown, I call it Mother, Ma.

Ritual

On the altar we create a form for the Divine Mother out of flowers. Flower in Sanskrit is *sumun*. The literal translation is *su*, good, and *mun*, heart - "good heart." Every single flower on the altar represents the purity of our hearts. Each imbued with, charged with, our sacred mantras. We can imagine those flowers representing the cells of the body of the Divine Mother. Every single cell is nothing but the purity of our hearts. There is no mind there—it is all heart. Navaratri is a time to open our heart, a time to expand our heart, to express that devotion that we have within. From day to day, our devotion manifests in many different ways, but this is a very special way to express it because it's all heart.

Living the Practice

That heart is not only inside this temple. As participants, we maintain that openness, that purity of heart, throughout this whole period, no matter where we are, no matter who we are with. We bring the utmost politeness and respect towards every individual we interact with, because ultimately, each individual is a representation of the Divine Mother. The Divine Mother resides within each individual, each creature, everything that moves.

The Divine Mother resides within each individual in the form of our virtues. So on one level, Navaratri is the celebration, the observance of heightening our virtues, practicing virtues. There is no tomorrow, there is no later on, there is no *only if*... During these nine days, we get the chance to really set aside all the differences

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and all the `ifs' and `buts' and let our virtues shine.

Personal Enrichment

On another level, Navaratri is also a time for the worship of *Shakti*, energy, power. A *sadhak*, a practitioner or seeker, enriches himself or herself during Navaratri with *Shakti*. In ancient days in India, there would be great *pujas*, great celebrations during Navaratri. And if one kingdom had to conquer another, right after Navaratri they would attack. It can be taken very far. So they would feel that after the observance of Navaratri and really enriched with this *Shakti*, now they could go out and attack. So that's another extreme. But for a *sadhak*, we are trying to come closer to the Divine that resides with us. This is because when we are closer to that Divine within, we are enriched, empowered, by our own *Shakti*, the capability that resides with us that usually gets hidden under many layers.

Three-Fold Growth

Maha Kali

The first three days of Navaratri are dedicated to Maha Kali. This is one aspect of the Divine Mother. Maha Kali is the remover of death. *Kal* means *time*. She is the Mother of time. Kali is very compassionate, very gentle, and very loving towards Her children, towards us. But She is very fierce towards our enemies. She is the remover of darkness, impurities, sloth, laziness and trickery. Someday, read the book *Chandi*, a beautiful story of how the *asuras* kept coming in different disguises, and how She overcame them, how She drove them away. The story has a parallel in our lives. The *asuras* are nothing but our own lowly tendencies that keep us away from our divine Self, from our virtues. Navaratri teaches us that the only way to come closer to our virtues is through our heart. The entrance to the kingdom of virtues is through our heart.

Maha Kali is also the remover of fear. There is no fear. Maha Kali proclaims, "Have no fear! I am right behind you. I am all around you, protecting you, nurturing you, guiding you." Maha Kali is very fierce to whatever

could be harmful to us. Our enemies are not only human beings, but are anger, envy, greed, jealousy and hatred. These are all the enemies destroying our peace. Maha Kali is the remover of them.

How? We have to take the first step. From time to time, we all experience a state of helplessness. In those states, when there is no ego, no doubt, we just make the call from our heart: "Oh Mother, please help me! Remove the darkness from my life. Cut the chains that tie me so strongly to my misery!" We will always be heard.

Maha Kali is capable of removing not only our fear, but also other people's fear of us. May I not be the cause of fear to someone else. To my utmost capacity, may I be able to remove fear from other's hearts. Whenever I do so, Maha Kali is expressing herself through me; she is residing right in my heart. The more we engage ourselves in acts like that, the closer to Maha Kali we find ourselves.



The first three days we evoke Maha Kali to remove all our limitations, all of our darkness.

Maha Lakshmi

After the darkness has been removed, the next three days we evoke Maha Lakshmi. Maha Lakshmi is worshipped predominantly as a goddess of wealth, the giver of wealth, not material wealth, but the wealth of wisdom, of virtues.

True wealth is very different from coins of gold. Wealth is contentment. Wealth is being able to appreciate the beauty in my life, the strengths I have, like the wealth of sweet speech and self-confidence. We evoke Maha Lakshmi to enrich us with this true wealth.

We pray to Maha Lakshmi,

Oh Mother, if You come, come in the right amount, not too much, but not too little. If there is too much of you in my life, there is the possibility of being intoxicated by your presence. I may begin to forget humility. And if there is too little of You, I may have to spread my palms in front of another. Please save me from that as

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well. May I be able to live within my means. Please, give me right intellect. Otherwise if I live beyond my means, I will have to stand before someone and expose myself to humiliation.

When we have the grace of Maha Lakshmi, we live a very full life with total contentment. I am happy in my rags. I do not have to look at somebody's silk and feel deprived. I am very happy with whatever I have.

Maha Saraswati

And then, when the darkness has been removed and we are enriched with virtues, the last three days we invite Maha Saraswati. Maha Saraswati is known as the bestower of spiritual wisdom, *Aham Brahmasme*, I am Divine. She is depicted as holding a stringed instrument in her hands, wearing white, very peaceful, loving. We evoke Maha Saraswati to bless us, to give us a voice and speech that is very soothing, very healing, very nurturing and very enlightening.

Importance of Bhav (Attitude)

So this little synopsis of what Navaratri is all about. It can be as real to you as you make it. There have been many saints in different traditions, and that Great Unknown, God, has manifested in various different ways to each one. To some, God came as Maha Kali, to some as Ganesh, to some as a voice.

Depending on the mental image of the seeker, the Divine presents itself in that form. Depending on the intensity, the longing, the Great Unknown appears. Someone asked a great saint of India, "How can I find God?" He answered, "The day your longing for God becomes as intense as the longing of a drowning man for the next breath, you will find God standing right before you." So if you need an assessment of your longing, this is something to check against. You are working on intensifying that longing, opening your heart and inviting the Divine Mother to come and take a seat in your heart. If She does not come right

away, that does not mean that you should get upset. Sit there with that anticipation and keep the window open. Keep the door open with that waiting. Waiting is very sweet. It is said, "The longing, the waiting, is life." When the meeting happens, then it all ends. Life is in that longing, in that waiting, with that anticipation.

Prayer

I want to encourage you to use this time very wisely. It is a very sacred time. We are very grateful, we are very blessed, to have this opportunity to be sitting in such company, in such an environment, compared to many parts of the world. We are very fortunate.



I would also like to suggest to you that you put this feeling in your mind:

O' Mother, any blessings, any virtues, any merit that you are going to grant me for this Navaratri, may it be utilized for those who are suffering right now, who are experiencing sorrow, pain and loss. I do not want anything more for myself other than what I already have.

May this deed be dedicated, devoted, to Your service. May those who really need healing utilize all the blessings that You were going to bestow upon me.

So this act of ours, our act of devotion, prayers, meditation is not only for us. It is for a greater good. When we live in service, this life becomes so meaningful. The very moment we focus on me, me, me, the seeds of suffering are sown. Let our life be a life of service. Let our actions be actions of service. In my opinion that is the best prayer and the best way to worship the Mother.

Fulfillment

In your silent prayers, in your silent moments, open your hearts, welcome the Divine Mother and just talk to Her. You may ask, "How do I know that She has come?" You will know. She may appear riding on a thought. She may appear riding on a breath. She may appear like a little spark of light. Whatever your heart and mind agree upon, that is Her form, that is her presence. Softening your eyes, calming your face,

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relaxing your face, shoulders and, get grounded and sit with that anticipation. When you are happy, She is sitting in your heart. When you are content, She is sitting in your heart. When you are not afraid, She is sitting in your heart. You may not be aware of this, but that is the result of Her presence in your body, in your heart. Whenever virtues are coming forth from you, She is present in your heart. So please, for the next eight days, stay mindful.

Navaratri will be as rich and meaningful to you as you make it. Enter into your heart, call out to the Mother with your mantra, which is Her representative, Her ears, and

let the mantra rise with that sweetness in your heart. Be like the little child who leaps for the mother's lap without ever thinking about whether he or she is going to fall on the ground or into her lap. Just make the leap. Leave the rest to the Mother. She is always there. We have to just be like an infant and leap with total trust, total love.

During the observance of Navaratri at the SonoMa Ashram in 1999, Baba Harihar Ramji addressed to the gathering with the following words:

Real Union Happens with a Pure Heart Mind Creates Separation

On this first eve of Navaratri, this observance of nine days, I'd like to welcome you. As you already know, we observe Navaratri twice a year when the two seasons are merging, uniting. This is the time of union, a time to gather together and practice together. It is a perfect time to deepen one's sadhana, one's practice. Anything new that we want to bring in our life, this is the time to start it. Our sadhana, the practice that we have, the mantra we have, is charged, shined, polished and awakened during Navaratri.

Each individual is constantly working towards empowering oneself with the energy that exists in various forms - whether it is material shakti, physical shakti or spiritual shakti. Navaratri is the time that is taken out during the year to engage in accomplishing

this goal. There was a time in India that princes launched attack on their enemies right after Navaratri. During Navaratri one amasses shakti, power or strength. So, if you have a mantra and you have not been practicing, not been paying much attention to it, during Navaratri we re-establish our relationship with it.

Although the Absolute is beyond any name, form and gender, during Navaratri we give that Nameless, Formless, a name, a form, in order to focus our attention. When we are giving a name and a form, the name and form of Mother seems most suitable because it is the mother we first come in contact with. She gives birth to

us and nurtures us with Her milk when we are born in this unfamiliar world. A seeker, a *shakti-sadhak*, is like a child who is calling to Her with that utmost love, with that utmost trust. It is the time to cling on to the mother like an infant clings on to his or her mother. **We have to dive deep within in our heart, not in our mind, during Navaratri, and find that need, that trust, that love, that pure sentiment and call on to the Divine Mother.** Reach to Her just as a baby reaches out for the mother in total

trust, in total love. This is bhakti, this is devotion, the easiest path.

In our path of devotion there are many enemies: doubts, confusion, lack of trust, fear, etc. These are all enemies on the path of sadhana, on the path of union. So, for that, during first three days of Navaratri we evoke Maha Kali, the fierce form of the Divine Mother. She is very compassionate, but very fierce for our weaknesses, for our limitations, for the darkness that shrouds us. In those moments of stillness and quietness, we try to have a conversation with Her without words. Can we have a conversation without words? Yes, through the vibrations of our heart.

There comes a time when we say, "Oh Mother, I don't know how to offer my love to You, how to offer my respect to You, my puja to You, I don't know anything at all. All I know is that I need Your love and your help!" With this kind of sentiment in our heart, when we become very silent and still, our heart begins to send those vibrations, those messages reach the Mother



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instantaneously; before even words and sentences are formed it gets there. Mother knows the need of the child, in due time it all comes but the process is faster when the child turns towards her.

Navaratri is the celebration of heart. We have to go into our heart, open our heart wide to that Divine essence, that light, Mother.

The practice of recitation of mantra that we have - that mantra is another aspect of the Divine Mother. Aligning our inner being on that wave length, let that mantra resonate within you. As you go deeper into your practice of jap, your mantra, you hear it, your tongue doesn't move. As you go deeper into your practice of jap, you just hear the sound. Who is voicing that sound? It exists in this cosmos, in this emptiness. That sound is constantly echoing. We just have to attune ourselves to it and let it resonate our whole being. Our mantra that we have received from our Guru is very powerful. It can give us anything we need provided that we have been able to establish that friendship, that trust, that love, that oneness with our

Guru and our mantra.

So, tonight is the first night, the first step of Navaratri when Maha Kali, who destroys the darkness from our lives, is evoked. Every Navaratri gives us this chance to start over again. We pray to Her to remove our limitations and darkness, to cleanse and fill us with virtues, vigor and sweetness. These all are her attributes.

Navaratri is very introverted, very silent, very sweet. It is a more inward journey. No matter where we are during the day, we keep our mind and heart in tune with our mantra, and towards that love of the Divine Mother.

Please, think of what Maha Kali means to you. Where does She reside within you? In what form? What are Her attributes? Do you see Her in your daily life? Do you see Her attributes coming out to deal with your weaknesses? Those moments are very auspicious moments. Those are the moments of Her emergence. Pay attention to those moments. Look backward, see

when that has happened, and if it hasn't, call on to Her to get Her darshan more often.

Please do not try to understand Her. She is beyond the intellect, beyond words, beyond mind. Mind cannot get in touch with Her. Open your heart and feel her sitting right there, in your heart.

Navaratri is the time of union. Seek that union. Union only happens with the heart. When the mind is involved, it separates us. These nine nights are the nights of the heart. Keep opening, keep opening your heart, keep calling Her in your heart, keep inviting that blue light in your heart. Sit with your eyes closed or open, no sound, and just observe sometime what kind of waves are emerging from your heart, what kind of images are appearing in your heart. Cleanse it, fill it with light, let the Mother come with all of Her beauty and fragrance. She is very close to you. Just find a little time for Her. Minimize your social obligations outside and find a little time for yourself. Find a little time for Her in the middle of the time you have found for yourself.



With these words I bow to the Divine Mother residing in your heart. May her grace keep showering on us.

OM Har Har Mahadev

A Simple Guide for Observing Navaratri

September 2009

Navaratri Prayer

O' giver of peace and auspiciousness!
O' medicine of all medicines!
Give us freedom from disease
May your strength be directed towards us
And bring us joy and auspiciousness in our lives
May we be the recipients
Of your sacred essence
As a baby receives nurturing milk from the mother
May we receive that nurturing from you
May we be able to find you in our lives
and receive your nurturing
Give us strength of devotion and enthusiasm

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